

## Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 SY-05

MCT-01 SAM-01 IO-13 /077 W  
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R 300842Z SEP 76

FM AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9806

INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN

AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMCONSUL JERUSALEM

AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

C O N F I D E N T I A L DAMASCUS 6586

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINS, SY, PLO

SUBJECT: SYRIAN POPULAR REACTION TO SEMIRAMIS HOTEL INCIDENT

1. SYRIANS WITH WHOM WE HAVE DISCUSSED SEMIRAMIS OPERATION HAVE EXPRESSED FAIRLY UNANIMOUS FAVORABLE REACTION TO SARG DECISION TO TRY AND EXECUTE THREE PALESTINIAN PRISONERS CAPTURED AT HOTEL. GENERAL RESPONSE IS THAT GOVT. HAD LITTLE CHOICE IN MATTER IF IT WANTED TO FORESTALL FUTURE ATTEMPTS OF SAME NATURE.

2. RESIDENT PALESTINIAN COMMUNITY SEEMS DIVIDED ON ISSUE. ACCORDI G TO ONE SOURCE, SOME PALESTINIANS IN THE CAMPS REACTED STRONGLY AGAINST SPEEDY EXECUTION DECREED BY ASAD REGIME. OTHERS SEEM TO AGREE THAT TRIAL AND EXECUTION NECESSARY, AND QUICKLY CONDEMN OPERATION, BUT STILL FIND IT DISTASTEFUL THAT FELLOW PALESTINIANS TRIED AND EXECUTED SO QUICKLY.

3. DOCTOR WHO PRESENT AT LOCAL HOSPITAL WHEN SOME OF THE WOUNDED BROUGHT IN REPORTED THAT TROOPS FROM RIF'AT AL-ASAD'S DEFENSE COMPANIES WERE AMONG THOSE WHO STORMED SEMIRAMIS. REGULAR SOURCE WITH GOOD ACCESS TO OFFICERS IN DEFENSE COMPANIES MENTIONED THAT  
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THEY HAD BEEN PLACED ON ALERT DAY OF INCIDENT, WHICH ADDS CREDENCE

TO DOCTOR'S REPORT.

4. OFFICIAL OF SYRIAN TELEVISION ORGANIZATION TOLD EMBOFF THAT SLICK EDITING HAD ALTERED THRUST OF STATEMENTS WHICH THREE PRISONERS APPEARED TO MAKE ON DAMASCUS TELEVISION BROADCAST EVENING OPERATION TOOK PLACE. ACCORDING TO THIS SOURCE, VIEWERS SAW ONE PRISONER REPLY TO QUESTION HOW HE FELT THEN ABOUT INCIDENT THAT, "I AM SORRY." SOURCE SAID THIS WAS EDITED VERSION OF ACTUAL REPLY, "I AM SORRY THAT THE OPERATION DID NOT SUCCEED." SOURCE ALSO REPORTED THAT ONE OF THE PRISONERS DELIVERED SHORT SPEECH AS HE WAS LED TO GALLOWS, IN WHICH HE STATED THAT HE AND HIS COMPANIONS PROBABLY DESERVED TO HANG FOR DEATHS THEY HAD CAUSED BUT THAT "ASAD TOO DESERVES TO HANG FOR BLOOD ON HIS HANDS" AS RESULT OF LEBANESE CLASHES, "AND HE WILL HANG."

5. COMMENT: THIS UNREPENTENT VALEDICTORY IS A TIMELY REMINDER, IF ONE NEEDED, THAT PRES. ASAD HAS COMMITTED ENEMIES IN THE ARAB WORLD. ON BROADER LEVEL, SEMIRAMIS INCIDENT HAS SHOCKED SYRIANS INTO REALIZATION THAT THEY ARE NOT IMMUNE FROM TERRORIST ACTION. MURPHY

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## Message Attributes

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**Channel Indicators:** n/a  
**Current Classification:** UNCLASSIFIED  
**Concepts:** PALESTINIANS, TERRORISTS, EXECUTIONS  
**Control Number:** n/a  
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**Draft Date:** 30 SEP 1976  
**Decaption Date:** 01 JAN 1960  
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**Disposition Date:** 28 MAY 2004  
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